

Globe and  
Mail

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# Can spam: how to manage your E-mail

**E**lectronic mail is the unsung hero of the Internet.

While the World Wide Web gets all of the glory, E-mail gets the usage. An estimated 79 million E-mail users worldwide sent about 948 million messages in 1997, according to a report by Pioneer Consulting of Cambridge, Mass. That is projected



**E-BIZ**

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to grow to 430 million people and 17 billion messages by 2002.

While many complain about electronic junk mail, called spam, inane messages, virus hoaxes and other wastes of time, E-mail continues to be an extremely effective and important tool.

There are a number of ways to make E-mail much more manageable.

First, take advantage of E-mail filters. These features are found in many E-mail programs that allow you to set up a series of "rules" so that messages from particular people, or which contain particular words or phrases, are automatically acted upon.

For more than years, I've been using Pegasus Mail, still one of the more sophisticated programs available when it comes to filtering. It can be set up to automatically delete, file, forward, reply, highlight or perform other actions for particular messages. I've set up hundreds of rules over the years that have helped make the amount of spam reaching the mailbox much more manageable. (My program automatically deletes any message containing more than two exclamation marks or dollar signs in a row, on the theory that it is probably junk mail. I probably lose a few messages, but figure if it's important, the sender will contact me again.)

Second, set up several free E-mail accounts for different purposes. You shouldn't use your regular business E-mail address when you join a Web site or service that requires an address as part of the registration process — you're simply inviting a lot of junk mail.

Instead, set up a free E-mail account through Hotmail or Yahoo specifically for that purpose. I've got one E-mail address that I use when registering; it regularly receives a large number of completely useless messages from companies that think I might be interested in what they have to say. I sign into the mailbox once a month to delete them, in order to keep the account active.

I've also got another free E-mail account that I provide to only a few key business associates. When I'm travelling and not logging into my regular E-mail, they know they can reach me via this mailbox. It's like having an unlisted telephone number.

Third, make sure you can check your E-mail through a Web site — it's an invaluable capability while you are away from the office. Your Internet service provider (ISP) may be able to help you: I recently discovered that the Toronto-based provider I use has established a feature that allows me to read all of my E-mail through its Web site. If your ISP doesn't offer this capability, you can do the same type of thing using a free E-mail service such as Hotmail.

Explore how you may be able to use E-mail lists for your business, because they can be extremely effective customer support or marketing tools. Put a section on your Web site that allows customers to join a mailing list by which you can advise them of new products, specials, price changes or other information. Make this voluntary: if it's mandatory, be aware that many on your mailing list will probably utilize one of the methods above to ignore what you send them.)

You can set up a number of free E-mail lists through the Microsoft Listbot service ([www.listbot.com](http://www.listbot.com)). If you want to import your own E-mail lists, you can do so by signing up for the Listbot Gold service for \$99 (U.S.) a year.

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